

Faith Based and Community Initiatives



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Willcox United Methodist Preschool

Community Facilities Program

Stories of Success.

Even if you're too young to know the name Rex Allen, if you've ever watched TV or seen a movie, you'd probably recognize his comforting country voice. Allen, who was a cowboy singer and movie star in the 40's and 50's and whose voice was a staple for western and adventure shows for decades, was born and raised in Willcox, Arizona, a small ranching community in the southern part of the state.

Ryan Benavides and his wife were also raised in Willcox. When they returned to their hometown a few years ago to work and raise their children, they discovered that child care was going to be an issue.

Ryan works as the Director of Public Services and Works for the City of Willcox. Within the city and surrounding areas, there were no certified child care facilities...a real problem for working families.

The Willcox United Methodist Church began providing certified, though limited, child care for kids in Willcox and the surrounding area, but were unable to provide a full service facility without funding for a new building. In 2004, Rural Development provided that funding through a Community Facility loan/grant. The new building will expand the capacity of the facility to include infant care as well as day care for pre-school and after-school programs. The \$350,000 loan/grant was part of the President's Faith Based and Community Initiative.

"Without this facility, we'd have to try to find home care," said Benavides, "and that's difficult to find here." Benavides said that having a certified child care facility means that there is both structure and dependability for his children. "This facility provides preparation for our kids for entering school as well as a solid after school program for school age kids," said Benavides. "I'm extremely happy they offer this in Willcox!"

Toby Collins, one of the child care facility's Board Members, noted that without the help from Rural Development "we probably would not have been able to do this expansion. We very much appreciate Rural Development's help."

Mission.

To provide safe, high quality care, and education to infant to five year old children of any race, denomination, or income in the Cochise-Graham County, Arizona, service area.



How the Initiative is Helping.

In response to a barrier identified in an audit conducted by USDA Faith-Based & Community Initiatives in 2003, USDA issued an Administrative Notice in February 2004 regarding the Community Facilities program that clarified that an organization with a board of members who all were of the same faith could still meet the community ties requirement of the Community Facilities program.

Prior to that Notice, USDA had interpreted the regulation that the board of an organization had to be representative of the community as a requirement and not just one example of how to show community ties.

Thanks to the removal of this barrier, in 2004, Rural Development awarded Willcox United Methodist Preschool in Willcox, Arizona, a Community Facilities Loan and Grant totalling \$350,000 to build a new daycare facility. The new facility will expand the capacity of the preschool to 70 children, which will increase the availability of high quality daycare to traditionally underserved populations in the area, provide a structured program that supports educational development for the kids enrolled, and create new jobs. The pre-school will serve children from 0-5 years old, regardless of race, denomination or income.



The Organization.

The community of Willcox is made up of many lower income families whereby both the fathers, mothers and single parents of pre-school age children need to work in order to maintain their livelihood. This created a much-needed pre-school program for their small children during working hours. The funding of this project would certainly meet this need by providing a facility for preschool activity for more than 40 children affecting many of their lives and the lives of their parents who are at work providing for their livelihood.

There is limited opportunity for other organizations to run a pre-school program in this small rural community. The

availability of community facility funding to a faith based organization such as the Willcox United Methodist Church allowed for a much needed pre-school project that otherwise would have not have been possible in this community.

Stats.

Year Founded: 1990	Number of Staff: 3-4
Number of Clients: 30 Children	Executive Director: Dwayne Owen Chairman of the Board